

THE
JUSTICE
OF THE
SUPREME BEING.
A
POEM.

By GEORGE BALLY, M.A.
Fellow of *King's* College.

EDINBURGH:

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M.DCC.LVI.

A Clause of Mr SEATON's Will,

Dated Oct. 8. 1738.

I give my Kissingbury Estate to the University of Cambridge for ever: the Rents of which shall be disposed of yearly by the Vice-Chancellor for the Time being, as he, the Vice-Chancellor, the Master of Clare Hall, and the Greek Professor for the Time being, or any two of them, shall agree. Which three Persons aforesaid shall give out a Subject, which Subject shall, for the first Year, be one or other of the Perfections or Attributes of the Supreme Being, and so the succeeding Years, till the Subject is exhausted; and afterwards, the Subject shall be either Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell, Purity of Heart, &c. or whatever else may be judged by the Vice-Chancellor, Master of Clare Hall, and Greek Professor, to be most conducive to the Honour of the Supreme Being, and Recommendation of Virtue. And they shall yearly dispose of the Rent of the above Estate to that Master of Arts, whose Poem on the Subject given shall be best approved by them. Which Poem I ordain to be always in English, and to be printed; the Expence of which shall be deducted out of the Product of the Estate, and the Residue given as a Reward for the Composer of the Poem, or Ode, or Copy of Verses.

WE, the underwritten, do assign Mr SEATON's Reward to G. BALLY, M. A. for his Poem on *The Justice of the Supreme Being*, and direct the said Poem to be printed, according to the Tenor of the Will.

Oct. 28. 1754.

P. Yonge Vice-Chancellor.

J. Wilcox Master of Clare Hall.

T. Francklin Greek Professor.

THE JUSTICE
OF THE
SUPREME BEING

O Thou, whose Justice awes the moral world,
Dread Judge, and Governor supreme! thine eye,
Thro' the vast amplitude of space diffus'd,
No action 'scapes, no thought that bubbling springs
In the heart's troubled deep. In vain the Wretch,
Specious in borrowed vizor, lifts his front
Triumphant: Thee no artificial gloss
Deceives: the Monster walks beneath thy ken
Foul with unnumber'd spots. His deeds are noted
In thy eternal volumes, to confound
His guilt: tho' now perhaps he wanton basks
In Fortune's sunny smiles, and laughs disdainful
At Virtue, pin'd with penury and cold,

B

Nathless,

Nathless, when this dark sublunary plot,
Which now with seeming intricacies mocks
Our busy search, amazingly to view
Shall stand unravell'd in th' all-closing scene,
The Caitiff, at the curtain's fall, shall bleed;
And Men and Angel-Choirs applausive laud
Th' unerring rectitude of all thy ways.

O may the Poet then, whose faltering tongue
Lisps these rude strains, and trembles while he sings,
What asks a Cherub's note, a Seraph's glow,
This mundane polity by Thee sustain'd
On the firm basis of eternal right,
O King, that reign'st for ever! may He then,
When Thou the scatter'd Particles shalt call,
His Soul's demolish'd mansion to rebuild,
Approach thy dread Tribunal unappall'd;
May Mercy o'er that Justice then prevail,
Which here his humble verse essay'd to paint!

With scanty line shall Reason dare to mete
Th' immeasurable depths of Providence?
On the swoln bladders of opinion born
She floats awhile, then floundering sinks absorb'd
Within that boundless sea she strove to grasp,
Shall Man, here station'd to revere that God
Who call'd him into being from the dust,
His moral scheme implead, and impious cite

Th' Al-

Th' Almighty Legiflator to the bar
 Of erring intellect? too weak his fight
 To trace each hidden link that knits the chain
 Stupenduous. Hence he labours to depose
 Jehovah from his sovereignty, and lifts
 A blind ideal phantom to the throne.
 Things oft inverted in this turbid mass
 Strike his disgusted eye, and shake his faith,
 Too prone to shift her compass. Vice he sees
 With gems and Tyrian purple sparkling gay,
 And Virtue mouldering in a dungeon's gloom.

" Say, is This fitting, (cries the doubting Sage)
 " Do these unequal dispensations speak
 " A wise impartial Ruler of the World?
 " Shall earth, shall air, and every element
 " Be tax'd to furnish the blasphemer's meal,
 " While Heaven's best votary, who in fervent pray'r
 " Exhales his soul, the scantiest offal wants
 " His macerated body to relieve?"

Thus Man, whose mind's too narrow to contain
 The vast dimensions of th' harmonious whole,
 From parts, uncomely if afunder view'd,
 Decisive sentence gives. Thou laugh'st above,
 Dread ELOHIM, to see him studious weigh
 Thy measures in his balance: Thou whose grasp
 The waters, and whose span the heavens compriz'd.

To

To judge aright how Providence conducts
 The moral system, where a clue is lent
 To unwind the mystic maze, with cautious steps
 Man must pursue ; each nice gradation scan,
 Observe how parts, erst opposite, conspire
 In one illustrious concord of design.
 Then every jarring string, which, singly touch'd,
 Grated harsh dissonance on Reason's ear,
 Will speak the graces of th' Almighty hand,
 And in a sweet-ton'd Diapason close.

The Sun of Justice may withdraw his beams
 Awhile from earthly ken, and sit conceal'd
 In dark recess, pavilion'd round with clouds :
 Yet let not Guilt presumptuous rear her crest,
 Nor Virtue droop despondent : soon these clouds,
 Seeming eclipse, will brighten into day,
 And in majestic splendour He will rise
 With healing, and with terror on his wings.

Things in progressive motion cheat our eye,
 Unmark'd the destin'd goal to which they tend.
 Moses' all-powerful rod, amazing sight,
 A serpent crawls, and darts its forked tongue;
 But in his hand resum'd, to Israel's sons
 Dispenses blessings, bids th' imprison'd stream
 Gush from the stricken rock, th' obedient sea
 Drive back its reflux waves, and stand a wall

Con-

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Condens'd, to yield a passage to his host.
Thus what we view abhorrent as deform,
And inconsistent with that faultless rule
By which a sapient God each act should square,
In th' issue will its frightful aspect lose,
And leave th' all-righteous Sovereign unimpeach'd.

What eye but melts with pity when it sees
Joseph's defenseless piety and youth
To leagu'd fraternal hate a prey expos'd?
Shall Israel's darling, nay what's more, shall God's
With complicated ills be doom'd to strive?
Shall a pit yawn for him, yet none for those
Who plot against his life? The bargain's struck;
Unnatural bargain, where a brother's sold!
The seven-mouth'd Nile receives him: here the sky
Fallacious smiles, to make the gathering cloud
Burst heavier on his head: the slighted charms
Of an enamour'd Mistress glow with ire
Fierce and impetuous as her former lust:
That stubborn heart must bleed which would not melt,
Are chains the meed of Innocence? does God
Exalt his enemies to thrones, depress
His friends to dungeons? Impious plaints away,
And to that Hell from whence ye rise repair.
O'erblown the storm, which only rag'd to speed
Heaven's chosen vessel to the destin'd port,

C

The

The Hebrew bright emerges. Quick the scene
 Is shifted from a dungeon to a throne:
 Next to the proud Egyptian King he moves
 In his high orb resplendent: lives to strain
 Old Israel in his fond encircling arms,
 To see the typic sheaves in marshall'd ranks,
 His brethren, erst with other passions warm'd,
 Submissive bow their vassal heads before
 His sheaf, that rears aloft its lordly stem.

Silenc'd be ev'ry tongue that dar'd to breathe
 The rank exuberance of a sensual heart
 In sceptic murmurs: Reason, stand abash'd,
 And, whom thou canst not comprehend, adore!
 If Virtue suffers, 'tis to prove her faith,
 To make abasement gloriously conspire,
 Like Joseph's, to her rise: each stroke she feels,
 But adds new lustre to her massive crown.
 If Vice, unthank'd his feeder, gluts his maw
 With studied dainties, and with riot swells,
 'Tis but a victim fatten'd for the sword
 Of Justice, edg'd to drink his guilty blood,
 A guileful Haman brooding o'er the fate
 Of blameless Mordecai, when raptures high
 Stretch every vein, and elevate the soul,
 When glows the wassel most, and sparkling joy
 Laughs in each offer'd cup, O dire reverse!

Shall

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Shall from the royal banquet to the grave
Be dragg'd unpitied, on that tree expire
Which for wrong'd innocence his hands had rais'd.

The scheme of Providence, tho' knots perplex'd
O'er the unfolding texture seem to cast
Unpleasing shades, at large disclos'd appears
With lucid order and coherence crown'd.
So in the folded tapestry, where parts
With gradual openings meet the pausing eye,
Here sprouts a leafy branch, a human foot
There marks the woven ground: all seems a wild
Mishapen chaos of disjointed forms:
Yet, when in full expanse the web entire
Shews the mix'd group in orderly array,
The figur'd history well-pleas'd we trace,
Each several part applaud, but most the whole.

Shall counsels, plann'd by Wisdom infinite,
And by Omnipotence conducted, fail?
Sooner the Heavens, the fabric of his hands,
Shrunk their extensive cope, like shrivell'd parchment,
Melted to viewless air shall disappear,
Yea all things into primitive nothing fall,
Than God's eternal and all-wise decrees
One jot shall be abolish'd. Flight of days,
The world obscuring with their shadowy wings,
Shall o'er his grand designs a lustre throw;

Shall

Shall clear that wondrous, soul-absorbing text,
Which poring seraphs puzzles and confounds.

Righteous are all thy ways, O Power supreme;
Whether thy patience struggling with thy wrath
Arrests th' uplifted thunderbolt, that longs
To lance destruction on the head accurs'd:
Or whether Piety, to purge her dross
By sharp assaying fires, thou seest permissive
Crush'd by Oppression's iron arm, or torn
By racking maladies, intestine war.
† Orb within orb involv'd, Thy mystic Wheels,
On which this politic machine is whirl'd
Incessant, with no giddy-devious flight
Precipitate their course: with eyes they glow
Distinct, and in a measur'd orbit move:

To right thy injur'd friends, and blast thy foes,
Thou counterwork'st Man's purpose, and from ill
Educest good: as erst thy potent voice,
Omnific, from the womb of night abhor'd
Call'd forth that light which glads th' invested world.
A Pharaoh's Daughter, by thy impulse led,
Shall in a Hebrew babe unweeting rear
Israel's Redeemer, and her Father's scourge.
When Jacob's Seed beside Euphrates' flood,
With groans responsive to his murmurs, swell

* See Ezekiel, Chap. I.

The current with their tears, and Sion's pride,
 Illustrious Sion wail, in ashes lost;
 * The ravenous Eagle from the East shall urge
 His rapid flight, and in his talons bear
 Jehovah's thunder: Babylon's tower'd crest
 Shall sink beneath his swoop, while he, full gorg'd
 O'er the Assyrian prey shall clap his plumes,
 Victorious Minister of wrath divine.

Thy throne, O Lord, establish'd on the base
 Of Justice, how tremendous, how benign!
 Here soft-ey'd Cherubim with wings dispread
 The mercy-seat infold, and beam on Man,
 Repenting Man, compassion and meek love:
 There flaming Seraphs from their pinions shake
 Horror and dire dismay: Thy awful sword,
 Fierce as a comet, blazes in their grasp
 High-wav'd, to flash the harden'd rebel dead.

Who can abide thy terrors, Judge severe,
 When by repeated provocations warm'd
 Thy anger burns, and Mercy strives in vain
 To interpose her shield betwixt thy bolt!
 Thy trampled laws, bright transcript of Thyself,
 And the less Majesty of Heaven's high King,

Who

* Cyrus, see Isaiah chap. 46.

Who pardon offer'd; pardon but condemn'd!
Bare thy red arm, and edge the vengeful brand.

Who in his milder governance disclaim'd
The living God, shall feel him in his dread
Vindictive Attribute, and trembling own
That Power, whose nod obedient Nature waits,
With all her armaments of snow and wind,
Of battering hail, or wide devouring fire,
To execute his vengeance who can forge
The meanest creatures into swords, to foil
The boasts of Kings, and wither all their strength.
What! tho' his wrathful vials in the clouds
Suspended stand awhile, nor burst, as once,
O'er a devoted Sodom, or a World,
Whose stains a deluge scarcely wash'd away;
Yet is His arm not shorten'd: Thou art the same,
J E H O V A H, thro' eternity unchang'd;
Thy eyes, too pure, too beamy to behold
Iniquity's foul mist: each thought profane,
Each vile affection must be far remov'd,
Ere we approach thy Sanctuary and live.

Tremble, ye Heavens, and Earth, but chief O Man,
Apostate Man, before a God incens'd!
Justice exacts the debt, but Nature fails,
Mere Human Nature; bankrupt and undone!
God must be righted, or Mankind be lost;

For

For ever lost, unpitied, unrepiv'd.
Dreadful alternative! heart-chilling thought,
That leads to desperation's slippery brink!
Who shall the price immense, the ransom pay,
Commensurate to Guilt, and Worth divine?
Who but the King of Kings, the Lord Himself,
The Coeternal, Coessential Son!
He, to appease infinity of wrath,
Must quit the bosom of paternal bliss,
And in a fleshly tabernacle shroud
His plenitude of light. Lord! what is Man,
Corruption's heir, and brother to the worm,
That Thou so kindly labour'st in his weal?
Oh! the excessive depth, th' amazing height
Of heavenly Wisdom! Justice how severe!
Mercy how tender! from the clouds of ire
Omnipotent distilling balmy dew!
Shall then th' all-perfect and unspotted Lamb
For our transgressions bleed, to death resign
His broken frame, to heal us with his wounds?
Shall the Son groan in bitterness of soul,
Implore his angry Father to remove
The baleful cup, empoison'd with the sins
Of a whole World, and yet shall Man transgress,
Man by His death asserted into life?
O! let us turn repentant to our Sire,

Shake

Shake off our fardid lusts, those thorns which ger'd
 Our Saviour's temples, and those spikes obscene
 That nail'd his sinless body to the cross.
 Let God's severity our hearts appall,
 Ev'n whilst his kindness clasps us in its arms.
 Else will that vocal Blood, which pleads above,
 Cry loud for vengeance, and its cries ascend
 High as the dread judicial Court of Heaven.

That awful Court who shall escape? the Dead
 And Living there shall wait their final doom.
 Methinks I see from th' empyrean skies,
 Preceded by his bright Angelic Host,
 The Judge descend: how chang'd from Him who late
 The thorny crown, and reedy sceptre bore!
 Glory arrays him; from his countenance beams
 Splendour ineffable: stars clustering weave
 A rich tiara for His head, who gave
 Their beauteous lamps to shine. Look, Israel, there
 Affrighted, and with dire conviction own
 Thy King triumphant in his cloudy car!
 See the Cross glitter thro' th' ensanguin'd air,
 Proud ensign of his conquest, and thy shame!

Hark! thro' Heaven's wide reverberating vault
 The clanging trumpet sounds th' awakening peal.
 Obedient tombs expand their marble jaws,
 And every sad repository hears

The

The quickening voice, and renders back its trust
 To light and life: each particle dispers'd
 Crowds to a heap, and builds th' identic Man.
 Chang'd are the living, and alive the dead.
 Lo! cited myriads fill th' extended plain,
 And trembling to the Grand Tribunal press.

The Book is open'd; and the seal remov'd;
 The adamantine Book; where every thought,
 Tho' dawning on the heart, then sunk again.
 In the corrupted mass, each act obscure,
 In characters indelible remain:
 How vain thy boast, vile Caitiff, to have 'scap'd
 An earthly Forum, now thy crimson stains
 Glare on a congregated World, thy Judge:
 Omniscience, and Omnipotence thy Scourge!
 Thy mask, Hypocrisy, how useless here,
 When by a beam, shot from the Fount of Light,
 The varnish'd saint starts up a ghastly fiend!

But Ye of manners blameless, faith approv'd,
 Who a long toilsome warfare have endur'd,
 By fleshly wiles assail'd, yet unsubdu'd;
 Ye who have fair Religion's cause maintain'd,
 Tho' Princes frown'd, and Flames encircling rag'd,
 With front erect approach the throne august.
 See how your Saviour bends his gracious head,
 Smiling unutterable love! the choir

Of Saints congenial beckon you to bliss;
 And all the glorify'd Assessors burn
 To add your steady phalanx to their roll.

Soon are their wishes, and your labours crown'd:
 For now, your virtue's test, your trial o'er,
 Where every bashful grace, that bloom'd unseen,
 Too delicate to bear the ruffling breath
 Of worldly praise, is brought to light before
 Its best applauders, Angels and their Lord.
 The Judge with accent mild cries, "Come, Ye Bless'd,
 " Share the unfading pleasures of my realm,
 " Coheirs of bliss, my Sire's adopted sons."
 Strait at that sound the Pious, like a flock
 Of harmless doves, are rapt with ardent wing
 To meet their dear Redeemer in the clouds.

The bellowing convex ecchoes to the Trump,
 And lo! the yelling Wicked crowd the bar.
 Settled despair, and pale dejection dim
 Each luring aspect: Beauty hides her face,
 And fain would hide her guilt: curs'd Mammon's slave
 Laments his treasures were not there secur'd,
 Where neither moth corrupts, nor rust devours:
 Grim-visag'd Murder with reluctance lifts
 Th' accusing hand, which Oceans ne'er could blanch;
 And, like a hunted panther, starts to see
 His horrid deeds emblazon'd in his spots.

Conscience,

Conscience, God's dread official here below,
Too oft her friendly whispers drown'd in noise,
Now rings her loud alarm in their hearts,
Their fears awakens, and forestalls their doom.

Methinks I hear a self-convicted Wretch
To his associates vent his anguish'd soul :
" Yonder He sits, whose mercies we have spurn'd,
" Whose laws we have profan'd, whose sides we oft
" Have pierc'd with blasphemy's envenom'd spear :
" How shall we now confront his awful eye,
" That melts all Nature with a darted glance ;
" Or whither from His dreaded presence flee ?
" O that some rock would fall, some mountain yawn
" To bury us for ever in its womb !
" Vain hope, alas ! these mountains and these rocks
" Soon will be gone ; the Heavens and Earth dissolv'd
" And nothing for His fiery wrath remain
" To prey on but Ourselves, immortal only
" To suffer an eternity of pain."

The Process stern commences : silence deep
And dreadful expectation sits on all.
Each hidden fraud, each word, and thought impure,
Each overt violence, or slander dark,
From out th' omniscient registers produc'd,
Blaze in the view of Angels, and a World.
The heart now bar'd before its Maker's eye,

Evolv'd

Evolv'd its mazes, and its filth expos'd,
 How leath'd a spectacle the Villain stands!
 The Virtuous look with horror down to see
 Now first in genuine colours Vice appear,
 And shudder at deformity so foul
 Conscience incessant plies her scorpion-whip,
 And makes th' abominable miscreants add
 Self-accusation to their charge, and own
 God's Justice in the rigour of his Wrath.

And now the Judge with visage all inflam'd,
 At which the molten mountains shrink like wax,
 With voice that shakes the pillar'd firmament,
 The dire award pronounces: "Go, ye Curs'd,
 " To fire, as everlasting as your souls,
 " For Satan, and his impious Host, prepar'd."
 Strait from the inmost centre of the earth
 Flames burst in spiring eddies to the skies:
 Trembles the ground convuls'd, seas boiling roar,
 And dash yon crackling canopy with foam.
 Creation sinks beneath th' enormous blaze.
 Myriads now burning, with th' Archangel's Trump,
 The growling thunder of th' expiring Heavens,
 And with a falling World's tremendous groan
 Mingle their hideous yell; and vainly wish
 They, like those Elements, could be no more.

His

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21

His Equal Ways illustriously reveal'd
In Vice's torments, and in Virtue's bliss,
Th' Almighty rises from his throne, and wings
To heavenly Zion his triumphal car.
Th' Angelic Hierarchy with loud acclaim
Accompany their King; with warbled Hymns
The ransom'd Saints their blest Redeemer greet:
Unnumber'd voices in sweet concord cry:
" Hosanna to the Lamb that sits above,
" To the World's honour'd Judge! how just His ways,
" How Everlasting Glory crowns them all!

F I N I S.